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Agenda item 18 (b)

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS

Written statement submitted by the Transnational Radical Party, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category I)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[7 August 1996]

Human rights dimension of population transfer in Tibet

1. The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities by its resolution 1992/28 of 27 August 1992 entrusted Mr. Awn Shawkat Al-Khasawneh and Mr. Ribot Hatano to prepare a preliminary study on the human rights dimension of population transfer. And, by its resolution 1993/34 of 25 August 1993, the Sub-Commission endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of this study (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/17), which found, inter alia, that "population transfer is, prima facie, unlawful and violates a number of rights affirmed in human rights and humanitarian law for both transferred and receiving populations".

2. In the progress report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/18) submitted to the forty-sixth session of the Sub-Commission Mr. Al-Khasawneh, in one of the conclusions said: "In circumstances when the purpose or method of transfer constitutes genocide, slavery, racial or systematic discrimination and torture, the transfer may qualify as a crime within the meaning of article 19 (part I) of the International Law Commission's draft articles on State responsibility and carry all the consequences for internationally wrongful acts and, in addition, those normally associated with crimes. Within this purview fall acts such as 'ethnic cleansing', dispersal of minorities or ethnic populations from their homeland within the State, and the implantation of settlers amounting to the denial of self-determination".

3. The Transnational Radical Party has been raising the human rights situation in Tibet where the human rights dimensions of the population transfer are alarming. The massive settlement of Chinese settlers all over Tibet now poses a direct threat to the very survival of the religious, cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people. At the fifty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Abdelfatiah Amor, the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance, after a visit to Lhasa in November 1994, warned in his report (E/CN.4/1995/91) about the threats to the preservation and practice of Tibetan Buddhism because of the ongoing demographic changes in Tibet.

4. During the last more than four decades, the move of Chinese settlers into Tibet remained an important Chinese policy to undermine the Tibetan population. Chinese leaders from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin have openly called for the implantation of Chinese settlements in Tibet. In 1952 Mao Zedong proposed a five-fold increase in the population of the "Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)" saying: "Tibet covers a large area but is thinly populated. Its population should be increased from the present two or three million to five or six, and then to over ten million". 1/

5. In 1985 the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi announced its Government's intention to "address the imbalance between the vast untapped mineral wealth and thin population" not just of Tibet but including "other sparsely populated outlying regions". Chinese settlements should be "welcomed by the local population, and should result in a population increase of sixty million over the next thirty years in those regions". This, the announcement went on to say, "is a very conservative estimate. As a matter of fact the increase might swell to a hundred million in less than thirty years". 2/

6. An official Chinese document, The Population of China: A Survey of Qinghai, reported in 1989 that for 36 years, from 1954 to 1989, Qinghai province (formerly Amdo, the north-eastern province of Tibet) received 1,167,110 immigrants from other provinces of China. This meant an average increase of 36,472 immigrants per year during the above period, the publication observed. 3/ Since there was no compulsion for people from "TAR" and Inner Mongolia to migrate to Qinghai, one can safely say that all these immigrants came from China. The settlers included cadres, university graduates, scientists, technicians, industrial and mining workers, agriculturalists for state farms, military personnel and former prisoners. Most of them came from Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Hunan, Shaanxi

and Sichuan. They were settled all over Qinghai, such as Xinoing, Tsoshar (Haidong), Tsonub (Haixi), Tsojang (Haibei) and Tsolho (Hainan).

7. For example, in the early 1950s, the Gormo region of "Haixi Mongolia-Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture" had only a scattered population of Tibetan and Mongolian nomads. A Survey of Qinghai states that by 1982 its population was more than 120,000, of which the percentage of Tibetans was 4.1 per cent, Mongolians 2.9 per cent and Chinese 87.7 per cent. In Gyugo township near Tsoed monastery, there were 30 families of Chinese and Muslim traders in 1949. Now there are more than 30,000 people, 90.2 per cent of the total population being Chinese settlers who occupy all the offices, factories and shops in this new town.

8. Massive population transfer does not only inflict a demographic assault on the local population but it also brings about a devastating impact on the environment in north-eastern Tibet. The Qinghai Daily newspaper recently complained that widespread and unregulated gold mining had seriously damaged State-owned mining areas added to soil erosion along major rivers and pushed some rare animal species, like the snow leopard and white-lipped deer, toward extinction. 4/

9. If we look into the demographic situation of Takster, the birthplace of the Dalai Lama. There are about 50 families in the village. All of them claimed to be Tibetans, but only two of them spoke Tibetan, according to a recent visitor. There was one school, where only Chinese was taught. There was not a single Tibetan teacher in that school. On numerous occasions, the local people had requested that a Tibetan language teacher be sent to the school. But the authorities have not fulfilled their wishes so far. There are many such cases in Tibet. 5/

10. China's official population transfer is continuing in Tibet. What happened in north-eastern and south-eastern Tibet is now happening in central Tibet, particularly in the so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region". The Chinese settlers already hugely outnumber the local Tibetan population in major "TAR" cities and towns like Lhasa, Lhokha, Tsethang, Shigatse, Dromo, Nagchu, Bayi and Nyingtri. The profile of Chinese now moving to central Tibet clearly divides into two types. One group is connected to the Chinese Government's aims and objectives: officials, miners, factory hands and soldiers with their families. The other type of Chinese settlers in the region are poor, unemployed Chinese in search of a better living who also benefit from the protection of the authorities.

11. One official Chinese publication 6/ put the number of Chinese settlers in "TAR" from 1965 to 1973 at 121,900 or "an average of 14,300 people per year". The publication goes on to state that in 1965, after the establishment of the "TAR", Beijing started large-scale economic developments in Tibet. "In the industrial sector, particularly, many factories were built and mines dug. To fill the vacancies for workers needed to run these economic enterprises, thousands of Chinese scientists, administrators and skilled and semi-skilled workers and their extended families came to Tibet every year. In addition, a large number of educated youths joined the efforts to develop Tibet", the publication added. On 24 April 1991, a Tibet Daily article 7/ referred to a

total of more than 200,000 Chinese immigrants who have arrived in central Tibet from 29 different Chinese cities and autonomous regions.

12. Even if we were to accept the above figure, spouses and children of the officially listed settlers were not included in this tally. Most family members are not listed on the official "Residential Permit Card" that must be carried by heads of civilian households crossing China's internal border. In the June 1994 issue of Chian Shou (Frontline), a Chinese-language Taiwanese journal, there was an article by Lou Ping. The article entitled "China using the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to colonize Tibet", states that although the Chinese Constitution stipulates that discharged soldiers must return to their place of origin at the end of 1993 the Chinese Central Military Committee decided secretly that beginning in 1994, PLA soldiers being posted in the "TAR" were to bring their official residential cards with them. The main objective of this secret plan, according to Lou Ping, is to settle these soldiers in Tibet once their duty is over.

13. All these trends show that Tibetans are slowly becoming a minority in their own country and the Chinese authorities seem to be the least bothered about this. Instead they encourage more and more Chinese to move and settle all over Tibet. The Chinese policy of population transfer may be about to achieve what repression and military might have failed to do during the past four decades. If demographic aggression against Tibet continues at this rate, it will not be long before the Tibetans are rendered a tiny and insignificant minority in their own homeland. By then, Tibetans as a distinct people and civilization will be lost to this world. It is in view of this grave threat that many people have termed the Chinese policy of population transfer "China's Final Solution to the issue of Tibet". The Dalai Lama, the Tibetan leader, has called this Chinese policy "ethnic genocide" against the Tibetan people.

14. The Transnational Radical Party believes that the Chinese authorities as the "Occupying Power" is violating article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in Tibet, by transferring millions of "its own population into the territory it occupies". In conclusion, we call upon the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to take note of the seriousness of the situation of population transfer in Tibet.

Notes

1/ Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), 22 November 1952. The newspaper is the official Chinese newspaper.

2/ Movement Westward, Reference Material No.2 Embassy of the People's Republic of China, New Delhi, 4 February 1985.

3/ The Population of Zuanqo: A Survey of Qinghai (Chinese), published jointly by the Culture and Education Bureau, the State Council and the Population Survey Bureau, 1989, p. 177.

4/ Patrick E. Tyler, "In Rural China, 'Gold Lords' Challenge the State", International Herald Tribune, 20 July 1995.

5/ Population transfer as an official Chinese policy, statement by Tenzin Talbar, Tibet hearing, Foreign Affairs Committee, German Parliament, 19 June 1996.

6/ Population of China: A Survey of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

7/ "Skilled immigrants of different nationalities contribute to the development of Tibet".